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Viewing cable 09CARACAS693, VENEZUELA HARASSES CLASSIFIED POUCH TRANSFERS

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09CARACAS693**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09CARACAS693	2009-06-05 16:18	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Caracas

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/05/05/113760/wikileaks-us-venezuela-even-fought.html>

R 051618Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3148
INFO NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000693

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/02/2029
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [AOPR](#) [AREP](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: VENEZUELA HARASSES CLASSIFIED POUCH TRANSFERS

Classified By: Classified By: CHARGE D AFFAIRES JOHN P. CAULFIELD
FOR REASON 1.4(b)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Venezuelan Protocol Director phoned Charge on June 4 to detail new procedures that compromise the ability of the Embassy to receive classified escorted diplomatic pouches. Despite claiming to be just "tidying up" procedures, this action represents renewed efforts to harass Embassy Caracas operations. To end this latest action and forestall future ones we will need to bring our objection to the attention of President Chavez, pointing out that actions like these are inconsistent with Chavez, call for normalization of relations including the exchange of Ambassadors. End Summary.

12. (C) Protocol Director Ramon Gordils called Charge on June 4 to describe new limitations on the Embassy's receipt of diplomatic pouches. He claimed that the Embassy had benefitted from "excessive" privileges such as permission for American diplomatic staff to take possession of pouches on the tarmac at planeside. He also claimed that the Embassy was abusing its pouch privileges by sending large boxes of items that should be shipped as normal cargo. This followed an incident on June 2 when Venezuelan officials at the airport denied an Embassy officer access to a classified diplomatic pouch and insisted on inspecting and X raying the pouch. After a standoff the Venezuelans agreed to return the pouch uninspected, to the U.S. with the incoming courier and refused to embark an outgoing Embassy pouch.

13. (C) Charge responded that we were no longer in the 18th century and diplomatic correspondence required machines such as computers that would be compromised if they were at any time out of the control of our diplomatic personnel. Gordils then insisted that the US did not extend privileges such as planeside access to foreign diplomatic couriers in the US. When the Charge expressed skepticism at this statement Gordils asked him to verify what pouch procedures were for foreign diplomats in the US and to get back to him.

14. (C) When the Charge asked Gordils who was responsible for making this change in procedures, Gordils claimed that there was really no change at all, just an "adjustment" to be consistent with Venezuelan law and that no one person should be considered responsible. (Comment: Obviously Gordils himself is responsible.) Gordils then went on to describe a series of changes in pouch procedures for US Embassy and others (he specifically cited the UK Embassy) including the requirement of advance notification of pouch delivery, the names of Embassy personnel who would receive them, no vehicle access to the tarmac to pick up large pouches, and the need to submit "franquicias" (an official form describing contents) for large pouches. Gordils finished by asking that these actions not be given a political interpretation or seen as an effort to complicate bilateral relations, Venezuela was just tidying up its procedures.

15. (C) Comment: Protocol Director Gordils has consistently looked for ways to harass Embassy operations including denial of visas to permanently assigned and TDY staff, denial of authorization by some employees to import personal vehicles, and delays in issuance or denial of diplomatic credentials. He was chagrined when the Brazilians informed President Chavez of US complaints about the denial of visas to diplomats, a policy that Chavez was not aware of. Gordils is now back to his old tricks. Embassy believes the best way to overcome his truculence is to again make clear to President Chavez that harassment of Embassy Caracas is inconsistent with Chavez's stated goal of normalizing relations, including the exchange of Ambassadors. End Comment.

CAULFIELD